Book Reviews

Because of exigencies of the publication schedule, book reviews from the previous two issues unfortunately had to be held over. They appear below with reviews for November.


Although this book has 33 contributors, it is more cohesive than most texts of this type because the writers are all from the Department of Anesthesia at the University of Miami. It covers the pharmacologic basis of anesthesia, principles and techniques, management of anesthesia, complications, and certain special topics. Some of the chapters are instructional outlines without references, but a few topics, such as charting, the anesthetic record, intravenous therapy, blood transfusions, and hemorrhagic shock, are discussed at greater length. Particularly well done and almost amounting to a monograph in itself is the chapter on obstetric analgesia and anesthesia. The inclusion of chapters on intractable pain and intensive care units in an introductory book is a good indication of how the scope of anesthesia practice has been broadening. The undergraduate student and first-year resident in Anesthesia stand to gain most from reading this work.

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The author indicates in his preface that the book is designed to aid medical students and practicing physicians. In this respect it provides a large amount of effectively illustrated, well organized material. The scope of the text, however, precludes presentation of detailed information, and it probably will be of limited value to specialists seeking current information on test selection and interpretation. The time sequence and the extent of changes in laboratory data have of necessity received scant attention. Representative graphs of typical patient data might provide a mechanism to demonstrate these points in a subsequent edition.

Although the author describes the utility of the instruments produced by the Technicon Corporation, the issues raised in this discussion represent an area of considerable controversy. The SMA-12 recommended as part of the routine order on page 307 is not a test. Different laboratories that use this instrument employ different procedures from different channels. In addition, the continuous-flow approach, which has been used effectively by Technicon, does not represent the only mechanism for moving fluids currently employed by instrument manufacturers or laboratory scientists. Accordingly, readers who are clinically oriented should recognize that some of the best laboratories in the country that have selected other systems have had good reasons for making these decisions.

The appropriate selection and interpretation of laboratory procedures represents an increasing challenge. Dr. Collin's revised manual should help to stimulate interest in clinical laboratory science.

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A generation of anesthesiologists has now grown up with Professor Dundee's publications on premedications, induction agents, and postoperative analgesics. Planning a clinical investigation of any intravenous anesthetic would be inadequate without at least studying the methodology that has been evolved by the Belfast group. It is no simple task to gain valid comparative information on the actions of induction or other agents, particularly as these are so rarely used in isolation in modern anesthesia but rather are used as part of a "balanced" or controlled technique using several agents.

Both authors have played major roles in our understanding of the pharmacology and clinical applications of intravenous anesthetic agents. A comprehensive review of this subject was long overdue and could not have been in better hands. The authors state their aim to be the production of "a detailed review of the whole field of intravenous anesthesia without reaching encyclopedia proportions," and as such, this book is an impressive achievement.

The book is organized in a logical sequence with brief opening sections on history, anatomy and intravenous techniques. This is followed by chapters on the barbiturates (three chapters), eugenols (by Richard Clarke), steroids, neurolept techniques (by James Morrison), dissociative anesthesia, tranquilizers and alcohol. The book ends with a miscellany of drugs and techniques of historical or other interest; a comparative review of induction agents, and, finally, a short chapter on intravenous regional anesthesia.

The three chapters on barbiturates occupy nearly half the book, reflecting their importance in clinical use. First, an account of their chemistry and pharmacokinetics, including a useful discussion of structure-activity relationships, is presented. The pharmacologic effects are then reviewed in detail, system by system, and the relationship between porphyria and the use of barbiturates is considered in depth. The third chapter deals with the clinical application of the preceding data.